

NEWS BRIEFING

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Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Public Affairs)

Secretary of Defense William J. Perry
General John M. Shalikashvili, Chairman, JCS
Ms. Kathleen M. deLaski, ATSD (PA)
Monday, February 21, 1994 - 2:00 p.m.

Ms. deLaski: Good afternoon. Thank you for coming to our briefing today.

Secretary Perry will open with an opening statement, and then General Shalikashvili will also have some comments, and then the two have agreed to remain for a limited number of questions.

Dr. Perry?

Secretary Perry: Good afternoon.

Today I would like to give you a report on some of the developments of the last 36 hours relative to Bosnia. These are developments about which I am cautiously optimistic.

The parties are effectively complying with the NATO ultimatum of 9 February. The Serb and the Muslim forces have both removed their heavy weapons away from the Sarajevo area, or alternatively, turned them over to UN control. There has been no shelling of Sarajevo for ten days now.

Compliance, however, is a continuous act. It is not something done for 24 hours and then ignored. We will continue to monitor compliance closely. We will be flying reconnaissance missions over Sarajevo and are prepared to strike if either of the following conditions make that necessary.

First, if we determine that heavy weapons are in the zone but not under UN control. And second, if Sarajevo is shelled by heavy weaponry, whether located in or out of the exclusion zone.

In addition, we are prepared to respond if the UN ground commander requests close air support, as authorized under the existing UN resolutions.

Yesterday I was in Aviano, Italy, where I met with the NATO air crews and their leaders, Admiral Boorda and General Ashy, who were charged with assembling the strike force that would have carried out the NATO ultimatum should that have been necessary. They have assembled a powerful air fleet -- F-15's, A-10's, F-18's, French Mirages, British Jaguars, Dutch F-16's, as well as tankers, AWACS, and reconnaissance planes -- a truly impressive air armada.

I found the crews in a high state of readiness. They have been flying over Bosnia, and in particular, over Sarajevo for months now. They have practiced target runs. They have trained with the UN ground air controllers. In sum, they were, and are, ready and capable of striking any target that is found in violation of the NATO ultimatum.

The threat of a military response was real, and it continues to be real. They continue to maintain intensive surveillance over Bosnia.

While I was in Aviano, I met with the Ministers of Defense and the military chiefs of the countries that would participate in any air strikes. These are the Ministers of Defense from the United Kingdom, France, and the Netherlands. Italy also participated as the host nation supplying the bases. I want to say a special word of thanks for the Italian support.

At the meeting, Admiral Boorda gave the Ministers a briefing on his operational concept, his rules of engagement and on the current situation. The meeting was remarkable in its historical context and symbolism. As we met, there was the possibility that within a few hours NATO forces would be sent out on combat missions under NATO orders for the first time in the history of the Alliance.

What was striking to me was the unanimous agreement among the Ministers that we must adhere to the ultimatum set February 9th by the North Atlantic Council, and that we would use the air fleet, if necessary. That is not to say that we did not pose hard questions to ourselves and to our commanders. These are people who well understand that no military operation is risk-free. But the meeting was characterized by a firm sense of resolve to proceed upon the course laid out in the February 9th decision of the North Atlantic Council.

It also was clear that the Ministers had confidence in the forces assembled and in the plans that had been drawn up by the commanders.

Most importantly, the Ministers were impressed with the close coordination between NATO and the UN troops on the ground in Sarajevo. In fact, the meeting was interrupted several times by updates on the progress of the ground observers who were verifying compliance with the agreement. That was particularly

reassuring to the Ministers whose forces were slated to participate in air operations, but who also had troops on the ground. All in all these were unprecedented coordination arrangements between these military forces.

The status and the completeness of compliance was a key subject at the meeting. While the current situation at the time of the meeting showed strong reasons to be optimistic and it was clearly the hope of the Ministries that air strikes would not be necessary...I emphasize that they were all emphatic that if the warring factions did not comply, Admiral Boorda should proceed with his plans.

Finally, I would note that as the meeting broke up, each of the Ministers prepared to report back to his own government, and they also took upon themselves the responsibility to report to other countries who had troops on the ground, or who were in a position to bring influence to bear.

For example, shortly after the meeting I not only called President Clinton and Secretary General Woerner, but also Minister of Defense Grachev of Russia, Mr. Collette of Canada, and Minister Ruehe of Germany.

The consequences of the capability we put into place, and the resolve shown by the participating countries, has been played out now on the ground. It is important to note that the meetings of Ministers also included the Deputy UN commander, General McKinnis, who gave the report on the progress of weapons being turned in to UN control. These reports were confirmed by tactical reconnaissance and there has been a productive interplay between General Boorda's air reconnaissance assets and the UN observers on the ground.

The UN had set up cantonments in which they collected the weapons turned in. They sent out foot patrols to sights reported by air surveillance, and to sites reported to them by the Serbs and the Muslims. Every site that they reached agreed to put their weapons under UN control. This was truly a major breakthrough since it indicated a real willingness and intent to comply. It is the first psychological breakthrough we have seen for peace in Bosnia.

The combination of our capability, the resolve of the NATO nations, and the willing response of the Serbs and the Muslims led General Cot, General Rose, Mr. Akashi, and Admiral Boorda all to conclude that air strikes are not necessary at this time. The basis of that judgment was that there was at the time of the deadline, effective compliance with NATO's requirements.

Just a month ago, Sarajevo was being bombarded by artillery -- often more than a thousand rounds a day -- resulting in thousands of Sarajevans being killed and tens of thousands injured. The past ten days, no shells have fallen on Sarajevo.

These results are not only a great relief to the people of Sarajevo, but an important step forward for the cause of peace in Bosnia. But the cessation of the shelling is but one step in a long, difficult journey.

On this journey we must focus on several opportunities. First, we must sustain the ban on heavy weapons and shelling. Surveillance -- both in the air and on the ground -- will continue. We will maintain our air crews in a high state of readiness, in the event that either the Serbs or Muslims return their weapons to the Sarajevo area or start shelling.

Secondly, we must build on these steps on the ground by taking additional actions to relieve the suffering of the civilians in Sarajevo. Fuel is still a major problem; electricity is shut off in many areas; and relief convoys are still being harassed.

Third, we must build on the willingness of the Serbs and the Muslims to take this one small step for peace to try to achieve the overall objective of a comprehensive peace agreement. We must keep our eye firmly on that all-important goal.

Finally, we must build on the close cooperation we have developed in the international community to bring pressure to bear. I have already talked about the excellent cooperation among NATO nations and between NATO and the UN civilian and military representatives on the ground. I also want to stress the constructive Russian role.

I have been in contact with Minister Grachev several times over the past week. From my first call, I have urged him to use his influence on the Serbs to get them to turn in their weapons. Yesterday when I talked to him, I thanked him because the events on the ground indicated that he did use his influence. It is hard to read intent and motivations among the warring factions on the ground, but I can measure results.

All that is on the plus side of the ledger. But the history of the Balkans does not provide a great deal of encouragement. But these events, weighed against that history, do provide some hope. This is the first time in the history of this fighting, in fruitless negotiations, that we have not had the worst outcome.

I was reminded of the story of the scorpion and the frog, which I will transplant from another part of the world where it was first coined. The scorpion and the frog were at the side of a river -- let's call it the Drina River. The scorpion wanted to cross, but he couldn't swim. So, he asked the frog if he could ride across

the river on his back. The frog let the scorpion on his back and they started across the river. When they were halfway across the scorpion stung the frog who became paralyzed.

Just before they sank below the surface of the water, the frog asked the scorpion, "Why did you do that? Now we're both going to drown."

To which the scorpion responded. "Well, this is the Balkans."

This time, for the first time in the history of the recent conflict, it could be said that the scorpion did not sting the frog. For the first time, we did not have the worst possible outcome.

It is important not to overstate the grounds for optimism. But it is equally important not to miss the opportunity that lies ahead of us.

I see three reasons to be cautiously optimistic. First, there has been no shelling in Sarajevo now for ten days. Second, we have had a psychological breakthrough in that the Serbs and the Muslims have been willing to turn over their weapons to UN forces. And third, is the close communication and strong resolve which has developed among the NATO partners on this issue.

I would now like to turn the floor over to General Shalikashvili to talk about the situation on the ground, as we now see it, and the problems that the various teams in air reconnaissance had in verifying compliance.

General Shalikashvili: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

I know that you are very anxious to ask questions so I won't take very long, but let me just use a few slides here, or charts to tell you where I think we have been and where we are today.

The first slide just simply shows you the history of the shelling of Sarajevo over the last 60 days from a high of some 1,744 rounds in one day, just before Christmas, to on your right hand side of that chart -- eight days, zero shelling.

It might be also useful to remind ourselves that during the time that Sarajevo has been under siege during this war, since the beginning of this war, I am told that over 9,000 people in Sarajevo have been killed, and over 57,000 have been wounded -- many of those children. I think, viewed in that light, those eight zeros on the lower right hand side of the chart assume a very special meaning.

This next slide shows you what we saw on the 9th of February, the day of the NATO decision. We were, at that time, tracking some 26 heavy weapon sites from

both factions, each one of them containing a multiple number of weapons. As you can see, all of them were within a circle of about 20 kilometers, or 12.5 miles, and it is for that reason that NATO established the zone, or that circle from which all weapons had to be withdrawn, or if they could not be withdrawn, would be turned over under NATO control.

This next chart will show you the 11 sites that UN established into which those weapons would be brought in...and they're shown here as those blue squares with the UN symbol on them. And the round circles are those locations from which the weapons were either moved into these cantonment areas or from which they were moved outside of the circle.

Let me show you, more importantly, the results as we now know them. And please understand that this is the information we have right now. It will probably change in the next few days as they catalog better, and so on. But what we know now is that in those 11 sites that have been established for the control of weapons, the Bosnian Serb army has now moved 250 weapons, and the Muslims some 46 weapons.

Now, in addition to these weapons that the UN now controls, the next chart will show you an additional 18 locations where there are weapons still out in the countryside. Fifteen of those sites, marked by the blue symbol, are where, right now, there are UN personnel controlling those weapons. By the way, those are 45 additional weapons that are under UN control, in addition to those that I've shown you earlier.

There are two sites, which at the time we were meeting there, we still did not have UN personnel there, but those are weapons at two sites, containing seven weapons, that have been turned over to us by the Serbs. We just have not been able to get there yet because of the heavy snow and the location where they are. We know where they are, and the UN teams are making their way over there to take control of those seven weapons, and those two sites are marked here in red.

The final chart that I wanted to show you sort of reinforces what Secretary Perry said earlier, that we, on the military side, are very well aware that this is not the end yet, and that we have to remain vigilant, that we have to very carefully continue to monitor compliance with the NATO decisions...and that is that no weapons are brought back into the 20 kilometer circle, and that any shelling of Sarajevo is effectively dealt with.

To that effect, NATO air crews remain ready to strike, if, that would be called for. As an example, just today over 150 sorties have flown over that area.

Finally, I would say that military personnel continue to be involved in the humanitarian effort. Many of our NATO colleagues on the ground are providing security to convoys. We in the United States military, principally, are participating in the airlift into Sarajevo and the airdrop that still is ongoing.

With that, I think both Secretary Perry and I are ready for your questions.

Q: Dr. Perry and General, I might ask you...you said on the way to Italy that the meeting was being held with the determination that the slaughter would stop. There is slaughter going on elsewhere in Bosnia now. President Clinton made it clear earlier that the expansion of the plan to save people in Sarajevo would not be extended to the rest of Bosnia unless you could handle it, unless you could enforce it.

Could it be enforced? And is there political will, as you know, if any, among the other Defense Ministers, to do so?

Perry: We joined the French in making this proposal to the North Atlantic Council for two reasons. First of all, we thought it would facilitate progress towards a peace agreement. And secondly, we wanted to take steps that would greatly reduce the slaughter of the innocent civilians in Sarajevo. Both of those objectives have been accomplished.

We are considering other ways of expanding actions of that sort, but any such consideration has to be measured by the same two tests as this first one. Does it really move us forward towards peace negotiation, and can it reduce the killing of civilians in the mean time. All such proposals will be considered based on those two criteria.

Q: But can it be enforced? And I'd like to ask General Shali to answer it also. What did General Joulwan say, and Admiral Boorda? Could it be enforced if you did extend this?

Shalikashvili: Certainly it can be enforced. If the question is, are there sufficient airplanes to do so, depending on into how many areas we would move that. I am absolutely convinced that the nations would make the airplanes available. So, I don't think the issue is an issue of military capability. It is rather the test that Secretary Perry applies to that question, and I think we need to carefully weigh it in that light before we discuss it.

Secondly, if I may, this is only the first day of the success in Sarajevo. We have to make sure that this is something that will hold and that has a broad, more lasting secession of shelling into Sarajevo before we push any further.

Q: General Shalikashvili, may I ask you a follow-up question from your charts? The charts did not mention how many, unless I missed them, of how many of these relevant heavy weapons have been removed altogether from the exclusion zone, rather than remaining under supervision or in cantonment areas. And also, is the implication of your charts that there are no additional weapons within the area that are not either supervised...about to be supervised today or in cantonment areas?

Shalikashvili: On your first question as to how many weapons were moved, we do not know, specifically, how many moved. We did not count every weapon that moved out.

On your second question, we are convinced that what I showed you here represents all the weapons that we know about. That does not mean that in the days to come we could not find some other weapons there that have been abandoned, left behind, that we don't know about. I cannot exclude that. But the combination of the numbers I gave you represent everything that we know about today.

Q: And as far as going out of the exclusion zone, I understand you may not have precise figures or you don't have 100 percent confidence, but you must have some order of magnitude sense of how much went out and where it went.

Shalikashvili: The Serbian leadership indicated to us that they were going to turn over about half of them to us and take about half of them out. That's about as good as I can tell you.

Q: Back to the question of building on the Sarajevo precedent, I'd like to focus in on the fact that Sarajevo was one of six safe haven areas that have been declared. And in addition, there are two areas that are not safe havens in which there's been very heavy shelling -- the Mostar area, which involves Croats, and Alovero, where there have been reports of a major Serb offensive building up, which could, in fact, cut Tuzla off from Sarajevo.

Are any of those areas active candidates, in your view, for something similar to the Sarajevo ultimatum? Or, are they fit candidates for that sort of thing? How do you view these areas?

Perry: Nothing has been ruled out at this stage, and we're considering many options. But, as General Shalikashvili has said, our first and most important objective is to secure the gain we've already made, and we will not seriously consider taking more options until we are certain that this one is really secure. So, those options are certainly weeks away...not days away.

Q: What options are under consideration that might be short of issuing another Sarajevo type ultimatum? Are there other, more limited uses of force that could be used...

Perry: Let me state again that our major effort, our major thrust in the weeks ahead, are going to be in the overall peace negotiations. We look at these other measures to the extent they reinforce and supplement that. The attention is drawn to these measures because of their dramatic effect, but they do not, in and of themselves, bring about peace. Our major thrust is going to be on peace.

Q: Just as a quick follow-up to General Shalikashvili. We've had, as reporters, different intelligence on the situation at Alovero. Is there, based on our military surveillance and reports from the field, a substantial Serb offensive building up there, and does its aim seem to be to cut Tuzla from Sarajevo?

Shalikashvili: I'm not sure that I can verify that. It is clearly an area that we are watching carefully, but I'm not prepared to tell you that we, from the intelligence that we have, are prepared to reach the conclusion that you just reached.

Q: The one question that we haven't addressed ourselves to, or maybe I missed it, is the why. Why do you gentlemen feel that the Bosnia Serbs, at this point, were willing to move the artillery and turn them over? Was it the fear of the air strikes, although there are many who say the air strikes would not have been that effective. Was it the Russian intervention? In your opinions, was there any single factor, or were there several factors that caused this to happen at this point?

Perry: You're asking the most difficult question of all, what's inside the mind of another person or another negotiating team. But, I could speculate on a few things that could be in their minds. First of all, there could have been no doubt in their mind on both the capability and the resolve of NATO to act. That had to be a dissuading factor.

Secondly, as I indicated to you, I believe the Russians used their influence on the Serbs to persuade them that turning over their weapons would be in their best interest.

Third, this has been a long, and difficult, and bitter war, and I would have to believe that they are looking for some relief and seeing some prospects of heading towards a general peace.

Q: General Shali...on the concept of extending the NATO air strike threat to other areas, before we are able to go ahead with the missions or the possible missions into Sarajevo we practiced for a long time -- intense coordination efforts with the NATO/UN people on the ground. Would you go through the same thing before you could reasonably extend this into other areas?

Shalikashvili: I think, as far as the command and control arrangements are concerned, as far as the practice is concerned, as far as the coordination between the aircrews and people on the ground is concerned. I think that any additional training, or any additional preparatory work would be much, much less if you were to extend that. There might be some additional crews that are required, but that, too, would be not as extensive as setting up the system in the first place. But again, I would caution, before we reach conclusions that that's the next logical step, I'd like to side very much with Secretary Perry on the issue that this is the time, now, to consolidate that which we have achieved, or appear to have achieved here in Sarajevo, and make sure that is working before we overreach some place else.

Q: Can you tell us about your latest telephone conversations with Pavlo Grachev? Did you have another phone conversation with him today?

Perry: Yes, I did. Without going into details on that telephone call, we were discussing various ways in which we might reinforce the positive move towards peace that's already been made. The principal point that I made to General Grachev was noticing that, while many of these weapons have come under UN control, some of them have been moved out of the area, and that it would be a step backwards for peace if these artillery pieces were then sent to shell other cities. And that he, and we should do everything we could to see that that did not happen.

So, we talked about many things, but the thrust of it relative to Bosnia had to do with curtailing the use of those extra artillery pieces to shell civilians in other cities.

Q: Did he request U.S. troops on the ground to assist in what's going on there?

Perry: Yes. He suggested that the peacekeeping efforts would be enhanced by having more troops on the ground, and particularly U.S. troops. I told him that President Clinton's position on that had been clear for some time, that we were prepared to send troops to assist in the peacekeeping efforts at such time as a general peace agreement was reached.

Q: Is it still your view, and I'd like General Shalikashvili also to answer this, that what is required to implement any peace agreement now foreseeable is a reinforced, tailored U.S. position of about 25,000 troops?

Perry: I'll ask General Shalikashvili to comment also, but I would just observe that until we know what the details, or even the basic outline of the peace agreement is, it's hard, if not impossible, to estimate how many total ground troops will be needed to enforce it. Therefore, I couldn't put a number to any U.S. troops who would be needed at this time.

Shalikashvili: I think it's absolutely correct. We remain in constant contact with the U.S. commanders in Europe to ask them, did they keep in step with the political process so they can adjust their plans, but they tell us time and again, and they're absolutely right, that until you see the final product, what it is, what the military tasks are that flow from that peace plan, you really can't come even close to what it is that you would need. So, I think any number that I would give you would be misleading. The President, when asked this question today, said under the conditions that he has often already outlined, we remain committed to help in implementing the peace plan, but the only numerical thing he would mention is that, as long as that is not over half of the total number required.

Q: The reason I ask though, is because as you know, Under Secretary Tarnoff has been going around Europe giving them a very specific number of no more than 15,000 or no more than a third, and I've heard strong defense from that view by senior people working for you in this building...for the U.S. military in this building.

Shalikashvili: Again, the total number...I would be misleading you if I gave you one, because I don't know what the military tasks are. The numbers are not just decided by the size of the area that is in control by one group or another. It is really much more driven by the specific tasks that you have to accomplish -- whether you're guarding specific routes, whether you have to do other military tasks like disarm or not disarm factions. That all drives up the numbers, or lowers the numbers. So that we don't know.

Q: We've been told that the United States has offered to send two, very sophisticated, fire suppression/artillery suppression radars to Bosnia with the understanding that U.S. troops would not man them, but there would have to be trained NATO troops from other countries. Are you proceeding with that? Will that go ahead?

Perry: We're exploring that possibility right now, looking at the possibility of sending highly precise artillery locating radars into Sarajevo. To the extent we're exploring it, we're looking at the equipment only, and not the troops that would operate it.

Q: Do you think Admiral Boorda is the next CNO, in your opinion?

Perry: No comment. (NOTE: Off mike comment - "I will comment that Admiral Boorda is a splendid admiral, and doing a marvellous job over at CINCSouth.")

Press: Thank you.

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